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DECORATION & FURNITURE

THE MODERN HOME.

III.—THE DINING-ROOM.



DOUBTLESS, Americans have been blamed justly for using the dining-room for a sitting-room or a general living-room. The dining-room should be kept sacred to its legitimate purpose. Books or a work-table should be held to desecrate it. Being thus restricted in its use, it should be distinguished from all other rooms, not only by its position, but also by its proportions and architectural

arrangement, its furniture and decorations. Its place on the plan depends on the convenience of serving, and the modern practice, with us, of having the dining-room with the kitchen beneath and the pantry at one end in an extension, which is practically a separate building, at the rear of the house, and without rooms overhead, seems to be a good one. It should become as customary to proportion the size of the room to that of the table, as the latter to the number of possible guests. As it may be taken for granted that no man on earth, no matter how lucky, has more than a score of friends, it may be assumed that his table need accommodate no more than nine or ten people at a time. It is, therefore, nonsensical to have a very large dining-room. Hospitality has, nowadays, nothing to do with charity, and should have nothing to do with ambition. Conversely, the ambition that keeps up apartments of state and exerts itself to fill them has nothing to do with hospitality or with the object of this article. The dining-room that we have to deal with should be of moderate size, to accommodate only those whom the host really cares to have about him.

An oblong or oval table of seven or eight feet in length by three feet six inches wide, should afford room enough for all ordinary occasions. Add a couple of yards of clear space all around and another yard for bulky articles of furniture and projection of chimney—twenty-one by twenty-eight feet should be sufficient for a cosy dining-room; or say thirty by forty-five for one in which a larger number of people would sometimes be gathered. As there is nothing to prevent the height from being proportioned to the other dimensions, the walls will be high enough to call for some division by means of panelled dado, or frieze, or both; and as the room is under its own roof, an opportunity is afforded for a coffered ceiling, or one showing the beams, or both beams and rafters. A skylight with stained glass is often desirable; and the windows in town houses should also be filled with stained or cathedral glass, because the view through them is seldom a pleasant one.

In France, where they seem to have adopted the venerable Mrs. Grundy along with some other English institutions, they no longer permit an open fire in the dining-room. Its flames, it is said, might attract an occasional glance, and the crackling of the logs or the falling of the coals might interrupt the flow of conversation. I do not believe that any modern table-talk is better worth listening to than the crackling of a dry log or the sputtering of a green one. And that must be an essentially unpleasant face that does not look the more cheerful for the reflection of a good fire on it.

Out with the stove—expel it—the radiator too, and the register, and all other wicked inventions that would take the place of the hearth or open grate, and restore the projecting chimney-breast, the carved mantel and its accessories that make so pleasant an

insist upon high finish. You will probably get with it good construction and graceful ornament.

In revival of the luxurious fashion of the eighteenth century in France, some of the costliest paintings on canvas, china, or in Limoges enamel are now inserted in cabinets or in door or wall panels, becoming part of the general decoration of the room. A noteworthy instance of this is found in the admirable enamel paintings, executed for Herter Bros. (illustrated on pages 39, 40 and 41). The medallions,* which enhance the richness of the splendid onyx fireplace in the residence of Mrs. Robert L. Stuart, appropriately represent those classic deities of Fire, Vesta and Vulcan, or—as the artist has preferred to inscribe their names, in Greek—Hestia and Hephaistos. The enamels† representing Spring and Summer are inserted in a cabinet in the drawing-room of Mr. Jay Gould's residence.

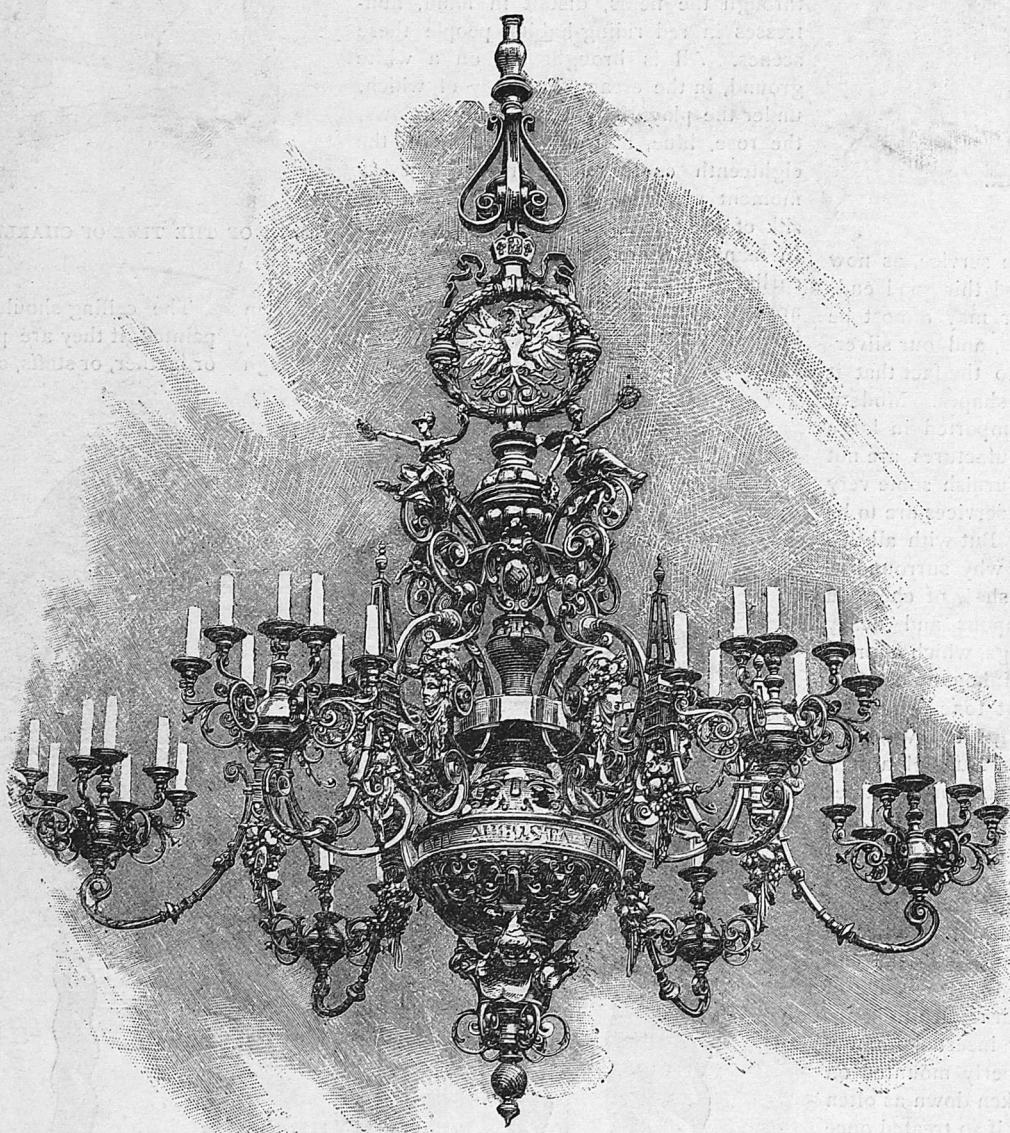
A good sideboard may, of course, be made of pine, which has the advantage that it may be beautifully carved with great ease by a skilful carver, and cannot be carved at all by a bad one. But it may also be very easily injured, and the wood is rather too light in color even when shellacked. To paint it is to spoil it.

A dining-room chair should be strong and comfortable above all things, but there is no reason why it may not also be elegant. Nor is it now very difficult to get such chairs, made either after old models or from good modern designs. The former are generally the more ornamental and the more costly; but they are, as a rule, better adapted to a state dinner than the purely modern chairs, which occupy more room and are more luxurious, fit to idle in after dinner, as people are apt to do when none are present but intimate friends. Some modern imitations of old chairs are so uncomfortable with clumsy carving that it is necessary to exercise some care when choosing such furniture. Carving that cannot be seen and is apparent only to the touch, and that disagreeably, may better be dispensed with. It should be in low relief, if present at all, as in the example illustrated.

Besides table and sideboard and chairs, there should be a

couple of screens to place opposite the doors; a clock, a chandelier, preferably in silver or brass, like the German one illustrated, or candelabra. These, with a carpet or rug on the hard wood floor, complete the furnishing of the room. Now, as to its decoration and general effect.

There is no doubt whatever that meals are best taken out of doors, weather permitting, nor that a dining-room should always have something of an al



CHANDELIER. DESIGNED BY L. GEDON.

opposite to the buffet and its shining shelves. These two, the mantel and the buffet, offer the principal opportunities for the display of good carving or painting or any other form of decoration. They should be conscientiously made the most of. The buffet is now again as it used to be when first invented, quite an architectural feature of the room. It should be treated with great respect, should be artistically carved, or scientifically built of some fine wood, rich of color and of grain. Those designs obligingly made by some architects for bungling mechanics to carry out are but so many ingenious contrivances to exasperate whoever is unfortunate enough to have to sit down before them realized in the wood. Beware of cheap sideboards with chamferings, groovings, brasses, scroll-sawed or rough cast and badly chased.

* The heads are painted "en grisaille" upon a translucent bright red ground over gold foil. The emblems are in raised gold.

† The ground in each is of translucent brownish red over the copper ground. The flesh tints are opaque enamel with delicate natural hues. The draperies are translucent turquoise green over gold foil; the birds and butterflies are translucent blue over silver foil, and the flowers and fruits are red enamel, touched with gold and white, over gold foil. All the four were originally designed for one fireplace.

fresco appearance. One great object of decoration is to compensate mankind as much as possible for what they have lost in quitting the savage state; and here, more than anywhere else, the aim should be to give the enclosed space somewhat of the freedom, the lightness, and the modest beauty of the natural



A DINING-ROOM CHAIR.

shelter of trees or rocks. The table service, as now ordained, contributes its share toward this good end. Flowers are never wanting. Silver may almost be said to be a common metal with us, and our silversmiths are beginning to wake up to the fact that it may be wrought into very beautiful shapes. Modern Venetian and Bohemian glass is imported in large quantities, and our own glass manufactures are not so far behind these but that they furnish some very good pieces. Handsome porcelain services are to be had for comparatively little money. But with all this glitter and bright color on the table, why surround it, as is often done, with the funereal show of ebonized wainscot and ceiling beams, pompous and heavy mouldings, and dark-colored hangings, which oppress the stomach through the mind? Mahogany or some other wood of a warm and pleasant tone should be chosen, and the wall surfaces above the wainscot should be covered with tapestries or stuffs of a middle tint, or with leather that shall harmonize rather than contrast with the color of the wood. Paper, for many reasons, should be avoided. Better a plain tint in distemper with a little stencilling.

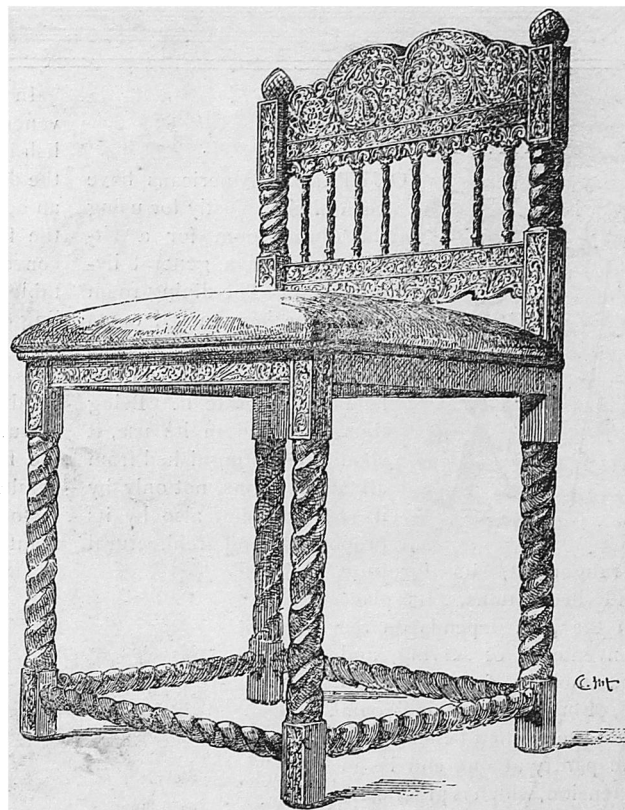
Much has been said and written against the use of woven hangings for a dining-room. It is objected that they retain the odor of cookery and in the end acquire a special smell made up of the fragrance of past dinners. This may be true with regard to hangings glued or nailed to the wall or inserted immovably in the woodwork. But if properly mounted on stretchers these hangings may be taken down as often as may be desired to be aired; and if so treated once or twice a year they are the most healthful and cleanly of wall coverings.

Good tapestries are not only dear but extremely hard to get. The ragged and moth-eaten "verdures," for which high prices are asked at some bric-à-brac shops, are unfit for use in the dining-room. Woven stuffs produced by the power-loom have to be turned out in such large quantities to make them pay that any design, no matter how costly, is sure to be common. Ordinary prints are too flimsy to bear stretching. Products of the hand-loom and strong silk stuffs printed by hand are, however, obtainable, and meet most requirements. These hand-painted stuffs are especially good, because no matter how simple the design or how often the repeat may recur, the very imperfections (from a mechanical point of view) of the process insure plenty of variety. In the industrial arts it is a great matter to know when the process of reproduction works smoothly and uniformly enough, and not to perfect it beyond that point. It is poor art to make your process so perfect that nothing more is

to be seen in a thousand square yards of the product than there is in one; and it is poor economy to cheapen an article of this sort by the abuse of machinery, so that it offends rather than pleases a refined taste. The productions of the power-loom and of steam-printing should be used only as draperies or to cut up into furniture coverings. If one cannot afford hand-wrought stuffs for his walls, wood panelling or a simple coat of paint will serve very well.

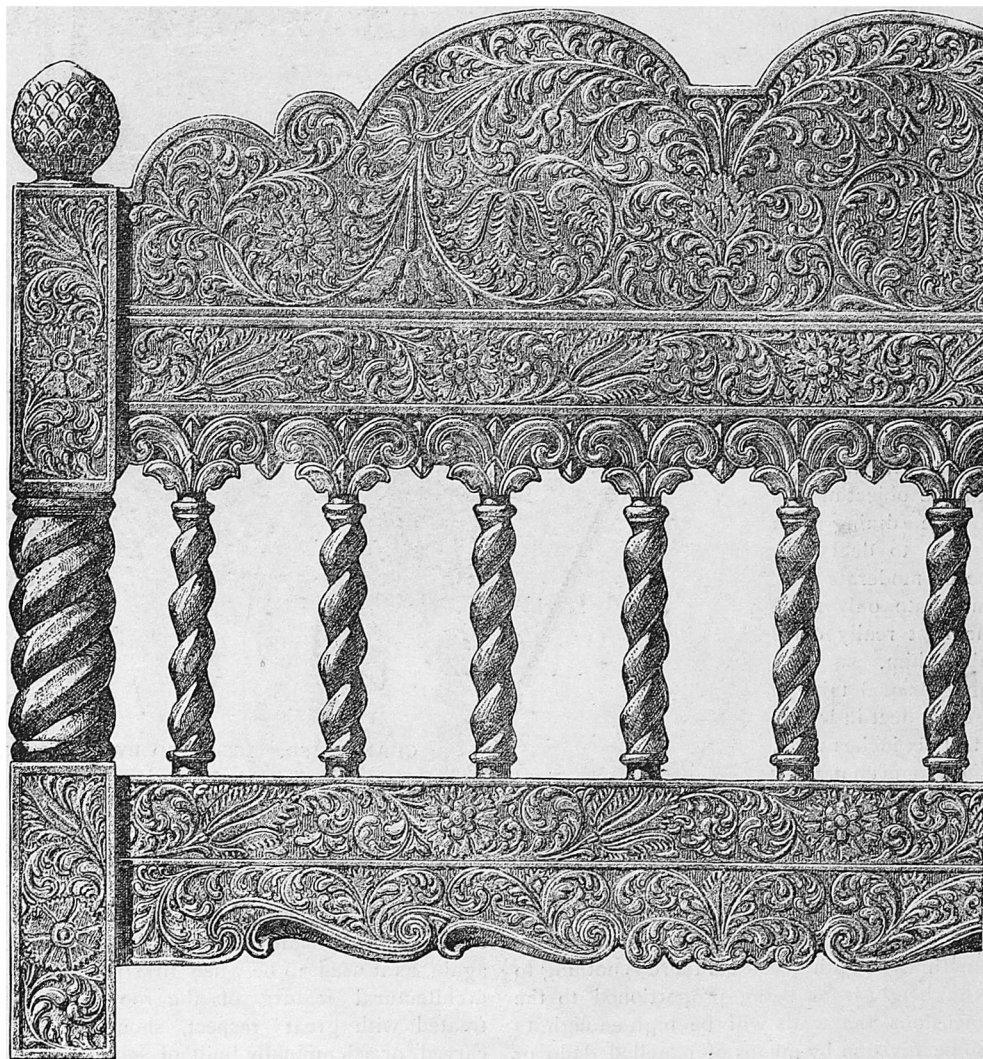
But, when they can be had, good tapestries are certainly the best wall-covering ever invented. In De Goncourt's description of his dining-room "where neither walls nor ceiling are visible for tapestries," how he dwells upon them! A set of panels which formerly decorated a music pavilion in a garden covered every inch, he tells us, of his four walls. These tapestries, executed from designs of Leprince and of Huet, have for subjects fantastic landscapes recalling the theatrical rusticity of Boucher, the terraces and balustrades of Lajoue, and the distances of Watteau's enchanted isle. Shepherdesses tricked out with ribbons, ladies with fluttering laces, wandering through the fields, distaff in hand, huntresses in red riding-habits, people these scenes. All is brought out on a white ground, in the creamy harmony of which, under the play of light from the windows, the rose, blue, and sulphur-yellow of the eighteenth century tapestries are every moment pierced by the brilliance of the silk of the web showing through the wool. In many of these fine tapestries and in the earlier Flemish and Italian ones the borders are as interesting as the main subjects. A dining-room in this city is fitted with some fine old Flemish tapestries, secured by a piece of rare fortune, in which, though

other ornament save a few pieces of old Sèvres and old Hizen porcelain, and any other decoration of an ordinary character would indeed be out of place.



CHAIR OF THE TIME OF CHARLES II. IN THE OXFORD MUSEUM.

The ceiling should be treated as the walls are, painted, if they are painted, or covered with tapestry, or leather, or stuffs, or panelled in some good wood, if



DETAILS OF THE CHARLES II. CHAIR SHOWN ABOVE.

the personages are less elegant than in De Goncourt's, the fine harmony of light and warm tones, the tender atmosphere, the representations of joyous out-of-door life, which make these woven pictures so suitable for the dining-room, are present. This room contains no

the walls are so. As an example of what not to do, let me describe in detail the dining-room of one of the costliest houses, for its size, in New York. This room is small and particularly narrow, yet the chimney-breast and the buffet projecting nearly a yard each

from the opposing walls narrow it still more. Both these and the walls, to the height of about ten feet, and the ceiling rafters, with a deep cornice beneath them, are of oak, heavily carved and stained black. Pilasters with carved capitals, also of oak stained black, are fitted badly into the corners of the room, crowded in one place by the door frame, in another by a bay-window, which itself is filled with gaudy jewelled glass, looking, when the sun strikes it, like a plum pudding ablaze. A stuff of common design and raw and cold in color, but costly because of the threads of gold in it, covers the upper portion of the walls, and on it are arranged some trophies of arms, and armor which would be more in place almost anywhere else.

The dining-room of a Boston house lately completed is much more sensibly laid out and finished. It is an oblong room, but only about one third longer than it is wide, lighted by a large, square bay in the middle of one of the longer walls. This window is filled with clear glass leaded in a simple geometric pattern with but a few small medallions of rich-colored glass inserted in it. The wainscot of mahogany is carried up to the ceiling, which is also of mahogany. Cupboards with glass doors, leaded like the window, are formed on the wainscot. The mantel has a border of blue tiles. There is a good deal of hand-wrought delicate mouldings in this room, but not much other ornament. The dining-room of the Winans house in Baltimore (the first-floor plan of which is given in the opening article of this series) is also in mahogany, but with panels of wicker-work inserted in the wood—a novelty which it will be well not to copy. It is, however, a well-proportioned, cheerful room, perhaps a little too nearly square. A dining-room in a house

with panelled ceiling, the panels filled with paintings of cherry boughs, with their fruit. So it would ap-

pear that the general practice is in accordance with the principles I have tried to state—namely, that the quarters and inconveniently planned houses, of her long-waisted site. There were other reasons, too, from a creamy-white to rich, brownish red, but not blue nor gray, nor, above all, black. As the dining-room, on account of its situation, is more likely than other rooms to be built in some certain style, all these great features of it which I have been considering should be in harmony with the style chosen by the architect. If the room is Gothic, Renaissance hangings will be out of place in it; if in the style of Louis XIV. then a Louis XVI. clock or screen will not suit. It is likely to be a poor room to decorate after our modern fashion by sticking up all sorts of things here and there, wherever they will look prettiest. Still this remarkable modern tendency may be allowed some play. If not in any larger objects, our eclectic tastes may, at any rate, display themselves in the furnishing of the table and the sideboard. Here all styles of all countries and ages may be mingled. We may have a rococo sugar-bowl, Sèvres and Chinese egg-shell porcelains and the pearly Belleek ware; we may have old English spoons and Revolutionary sugar-tongs, and Venetian blown glass, and American cut glass, and Danish ware imitating the Greek, and Minton ware imitating Palissy, and, in fine, we may lay ourselves out quite regardless of expense or congruity. But, however this question of style may be met, do not have a gloomy dining-room. ROGER RIORDAN.



DESIGN FOR EMBOSSED LEATHER.

FROM AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FRENCH MODEL.

THIRTY years ago the dining-room in New York houses was commonly in the basement. In Boston such a thing was hardly known—is hardly known now. New York, however, most unhappy of all large cities, has always had to pay the penalty, in cramped



VESTA AND VULCAN.

ENAMEL DECORATIONS BY FRÉDÉRIC DE COURCY. IN THE ONYX MANTELPiece IN THE RESIDENCE OF MRS. ROBERT L. STUART, NEW YORK. (SEE PAGE 36.)

near Fifth Avenue, decorated by Francis Lathrop, has the walls painted in distemper in a russet tone

tone of color to be aimed at in a dining-room should be warm, rather light and cheerful, anything, in fact,

beside the shape of the island, that made a basement dining-room desirable. The thousand and one con-

trivances that make housekeeping so easy to-day were unknown to our grandmothers, and servants were so inefficient, and so hard to get, that everything was done that could be done to save labor. Lifts and dumb-waiters being practically unknown, the saving of labor resulting from having the dining-room on a level with the kitchen was very great, and the "high-stoop" house was naturally developed to meet this "long-felt want." The high "stoop" gave us a reasonably light dining-room at the front of the house, and an equally well-lighted kitchen at the rear. The "stoop" led to the parlor-floor with its two large rooms, a "state" parlor in front devoted to formality and visitors, and shunned by the family at large, and a back-room which, if a use was ever found for it, was sometimes made a living-room of, and sometimes reserved for a dining-room to be used only on important occasions. If this were the place for it, an account of the development of the New York house of to-day from the original Dutch type would be interesting. It would be the history of an architectural struggle with difficulties more serious and annoying than are met with in any other city that I know of. So great were the inconveniences that attended the giving of dinner-parties, in houses built on the artless plan which exhausted the inventive talent of our fathers, it is not surprising to find them next beating their brains to contrive a butler's pantry on the main floor. And,

as there were only two ways of doing this—one by making a room at the end of the passage-way, the other by building an "extension"—fatal word!—

architects, or of our builders rather, has not been sufficient to enable them to improve upon this dreary old plan. We still go on building houses in which only the rooms at the front and rear have any direct light, and now, as fifty years ago, in nine houses out of every ten, the cheer-fulest place for the dining-room, the most convenient, is found to be in the basement.

Thirty years ago twenty-five feet was considered the right width for a comfortable house; and such houses seem to us, to-day, with our pigmy notions, almost too roomy to be true. As the "social centre" began to move up from Washington Square, however, the rich men of the time gave themselves more elbow-room, and many generous houses were built between Waverley Place and Fourteenth Street, which still remain, and make that part of Fifth Avenue almost the only enviable place to live in that our city affords.

Where there is land enough to build on, for elegance and comfort, one house will be in general terms like another, in Paris and Boston, in New York, Vienna, and London. But it has come to this pass in New York, that the richest man cannot reconcile it with his conscience to take as much land as he needs to build on, nor can he, and the exceptions to this statement are few, keep his mind clear, in building, of the



"SPRING."

ENAMELLED PANEL BY FRÉDÉRIC DE COURCY. IN A CABINET IN THE RESIDENCE OF JAY GOULD, NEW YORK. (SEE PAGE 36.)

across the rear of the house, we see the birth of the "middle room," the "dark room," which is the bête noir of New York housekeepers. All the wit of our

existence of lots, so that, not only do our houses in general look, as the Grand Duke Alexis politely told us, like packing-boxes set on end, but many of the

more pretentious ones appear to be concretions of single houses reduced to a semi-homogeneous mass by atmospheric or other pressure. In passing the Stewart nightmare I amuse myself with marking out the divisions: from the wall to the front of the house, one lot; the house itself, two lots; the picture gallery, one lot; the yard, another lot. And other houses can be similarly divided off, showing how hard it is for the builder to divest himself of early prejudices.

In these scrimped ways of building, so engrafted on New York, the dining-room is too often the room that suffers most. In general, we think we can better put up with a dark and stuffy room for a dining-room than to suffer from darkness and stuffiness in parlor or living-room. Beside, many people reason that, as the general dinner hour is six o'clock or thereabouts, the dining-room can well enough dispense with windows or, at any rate, with direct communication with the outside air. And there are plenty of people in this city of ours who eat their breakfast, luncheon, and dinner by gas-light. I had a servant lately who left the rich and fashionable people she was living with, because in their sumptuously furnished apartment the kitchen and the servants' bedroom had no direct light from out-of-doors, but were lighted by

herself, since their dining-room was also dark, and they had only one really well-lighted room, the parlor. Not long from Ireland, with its delicious air, and

escaped was simple-hearted enough. "I don't understand," she said, "how gentlefolks as has so much money can live in such a poor way!"

The Irish maiden, fresh from the healthful independence of her shieling, could not understand the submission of rich people to inconvenience, discomfort, and unhealthy ways of living, when a reputation for fashion is at stake. For was not this "apartment house," with its dark dining-room and darker kitchen, and bedrooms for the most part lighted and aired only by shafts, a fashionable house in a fashionable quarter? Was there not a weary and supercilious hall-boy with buttons galore, and an elevator with another boy in it still wearier and more supercilious than the other? And were there not marble-paved halls with marble dadoes, and was not the whole place resplendent with polished wood jig-sawed, and moulded, and chamfered, to within an inch of its life; and mantels of marbleized slate incised all over with patterns apparently gnawed by worms who had been through a course of free-hand drawing? And was there not "awealth," as the newspaper reporters would say, of ground glass in all the doors "sand-blasted" regardless of cheapness into designs of "rare" ugliness? And the gas-fixtures, did they not really deserve praise for the skill



"SUMMER."

ENAMELLED PANEL BY FRÉDÉRIC DE COURCY. IN A CABINET IN THE RESIDENCE OF JAY GOULD, NEW YORK. (SEE PAGE 36.)

gas. The girl found her eyes and her general health suffering from this unnatural way of life; but she admitted that her employers were little better off than

from the happy poverty that had given health to her cheek and grace to her form, her comment on the specimen of our civilization from which she had

with which they combined the maximum of "splurge" with the minimum of cost? And did not the mirrors that reflected all this Philistinism rightly congratulate

themselves on their share in the glory of the rooms, and laugh to scorn the unfashionable folk who stood

house fortunate enough to be upon a corner has this advantage—leaving these out of the question, it is, if not impossible, certainly extremely difficult, to build a house on a New York lot that shall have more than two well-lighted rooms on each floor. I am not thinking, now, of lots twenty-five feet wide, but of the commoner sort, eighteen feet, and twelve feet, for, to such scraps and parings we long ago condescended. And it is the effort to get a third room on each floor, or at any rate on the main floor, that has brought us to the "middle rooms" and "dark rooms" we all know so well. The attempt is so universally a failure that I may say I have never seen it succeed, nor do I see how, in the nature of the case, it can possibly succeed. A common device is to have a vestibule lead from the front door passing the drawing-room, lead to the hall in which is the staircase, the drawing-room having two doors, one opening upon the vestibule, the other upon the hall. From the hall on the other side we enter the library, which takes up the whole width of the house, except a space for a passage between the dining-room and the hall, but the reserving this passage is not felt as diminishing the size of the library, which is large enough for looks and for use. Then comes the dining-room, which is contained in an extension from the main building so wide as to leave only room for a good-sized window, the sole direct light of the large library. The dining-room is sufficiently lighted by two windows at the side and a small one at the end, in the jog formed by the retreat of the butler's pantry. This is as good and well-considered a plan as I have ever seen for making the best of a city lot. But it is to be remembered that the whole lot is covered by the house, with the exception of a small area at the side of the dining-room, and if ever it should enter into the heart of the neighbor on the left to fill up his lot with an "extension," it would be "all up" with the library of this house, so far as light is concerned, and the dining-room would suffer, as well, though not to the same extent.

CLARENCE COOK.

COLOR SUGGESTIONS.

THE following color suggestions for the decoration of the dining-room given in an old number of the magazine, in answer to a correspondent, may not be without interest now, in connection with the hints given by Mr. Roger Riordan. By the way, our contributor's objection to wall paper in the dining-room, we presume, applies only to such an expensively equipped apartment as he describes. Certainly for persons of ordinary means, there can be no better wall covering than such admirably colored wall papers as are for sale at very reasonable cost, by all first-class dealers. Painted walls, unless embellished at a greater cost than is within the reach of the ordinary purse, are generally cheerless and formal. But to proceed with our color suggestions.

With your dining-room furnished in mahogany, let the paper be red in tone, if you want a harmony, or green in tone, if you desire a contrast. With oak furniture you might have purple, brown, chocolate, maroon, or leather colored dado, with upper portion of walls, or filling, a quiet green.

With the room furnished in oak, the ceiling may be colored a deep sage green, divided into panels by a flat oak moulding with reed edges; the cornice a dark old oak tint, with cove (if any) deep dead crimson. Have a frieze 2½ feet deep of deep tawny red, painted under the cornice on the face of the wall, with an oak picture-rod 3 inches deep at the lower edge. The rest of the wall surface may be painted a rich gold olive with damask ornament, stencilled on in deeper shades of the same color—or use a quiet self-colored paper of simple pattern and free from gold. If you use paper it may be of the same color as recommended for painting, namely, golden olive in tone. Let the woodwork be painted a deep antique oak color, so as to accord with the furniture. The door panels may be rather darker than the styles, but under no consideration must any graining be allowed. Your curtains may be deep tawny red.

In painting cornices dark colors should be avoided, red used very sparingly, blue plentifully, and yellow or gold, the former especially, in moderation. Red, vermilion, carmine, or lake, may be used in the quilts; blue—ultramarine—on flat and hollow surfaces, and

gold or yellow on prominent or rounded objects. Intense colors ought only to be used sparingly on small



EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FLEMISH TAPESTRY BORDER.

ready to exchange all this "style" for the light and air of heaven?

Leaving out of the question houses built on land sufficient for light on three sides at least, and every



CONTINUATION OF FLEMISH TAPESTRY BORDER.

objects. For the "centre ornament"—which we suppose is the usual plastic abomination—use the same colors as for the cornice, but with no greater quantity of the deeper colors than is necessary for balance.